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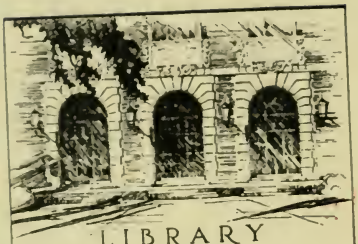
Touring historic Jacksonville.

(1927)



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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

TOURING HISTORIC JACKSONVILLE

413 North Prairie Street

Touring Historic Jacksonville

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Edited by
LILLIAN IRLAND DANSKIN

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A Century Old City

Classic Jacksonville had her one hundredth birthday in 1925. On April 26, 1825 the survey of the original plat of Jacksonville was recorded, and that is considered the birthday of this elm-shaded city. This was an important village when Chicago was an Indian trading post. No city in Illinois is so rich in historic interest nor so blessed with educational institutions.

Let us take a drive about the streets of this most interesting and classic city. Starting at the west side of the square, on the right hand is the Ayers National Bank, the oldest in Jacksonville, which was organized by M. P. and A. E. Ayers in 1852. It is the second in point of age in the State.

In driving up West State Street, one follows the old State road, which was the highway between Springfield, Naples, and Meredosia, and other points on the Illinois River. This was the main artery of travel then. Note the way the land slopes down each way from the street, showing how the main roads followed the highest points.

Out this state road July 4th, 1861, marched Colonel Ulysses S. Grant, with his raw regiment, the 21st Illinois Infantry. They camped at the Fair Grounds, just west of the Illinois School for the Deaf, and there Colonel Grant watched his

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NEWTON BATEMAN HIGH SCHOOL

GOV. JOSEPH DUNCAN MEMORIAL

soldiers and kept bootleggers from selling whiskey to them.

One block west of the square stands the third Morgan County court house, built in 1868. Here may be seen a tablet to Stephen A. Douglas who located in Jacksonville in 1834, and was the first state's attorney. Here he was first called "The Little Giant." From this town he was sent to the legislature in 1836.

In the same block, opposite the New Dunlap Hotel, stands a building with wrought iron trimming around the porches. This was an early tavern in the old days.

At the next corner there is the unusual sight of a church on each of the four corners. On the northeast, State Street Presbyterian; southeast, Trinity Episcopal (the oldest Episcopal church in Illinois); northwest, the First Baptist, and on the southwest, Grace Methodist Episcopal. On the cite of this handsome stone edifice stood the pioneer home of Dr. Ero Chandler, the first physician in Jacksonville.

In the next block we see the new $300,000.00 Newton Bateman Memorial High School, named for one of Jacksonville's most noted citizens. He was an early graduate of Illinois College and later principal of the first district school, built on the site of this fine high school. He was State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 1858 to 1863, and in that time organized the public school system of Illinois. Later he was for years president of Knox College.

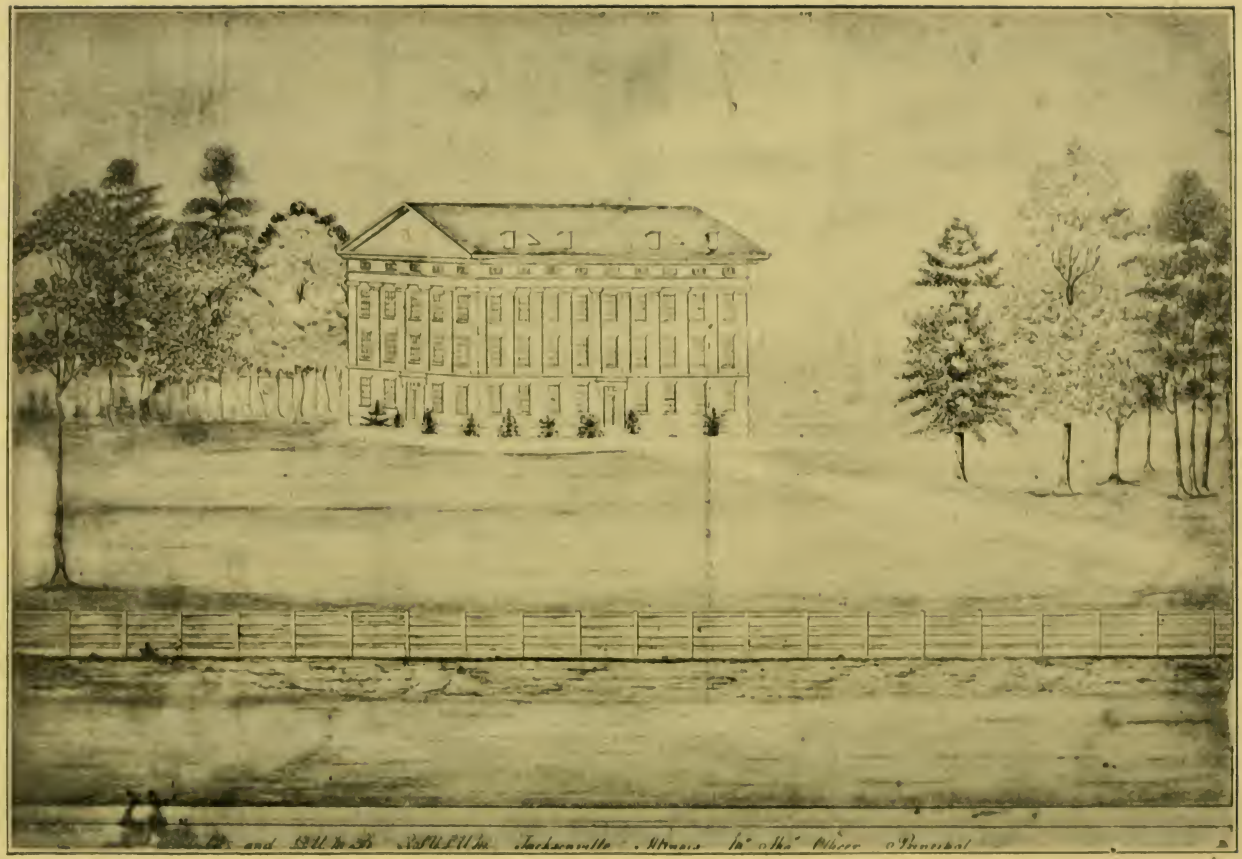
About two blocks west on the south side of

ILLINOIS SCHOOL FOR DEAF

the street, near the corner of Westminster, stands the modest house which was the home of the second Richard Yates—the third governor Jacksonville gave to Illinois. He was born and raised in this city, and was governor from 1901 to 1905.

In the next block, the house at 907 was the home of Newton Bateman. At 1019 West State stands the former home of Porter Clay, brother of the famous Henry Clay. He lived here in 1830, and was one of the first directors of the "Deaf and Dumb Asylum" which was provided for in a bill passed by the legislature in 1838-39.

A few blocks farther west the tour approaches Duncan Park—named for the first governor Jacksonville gave to Illinois—Gov. Joseph Duncan, who served from 1834 to 1838. He was also congressman and secured to the State of Illinois from Wisconsin, the northern strip on which Chicago stands, thus giving Illinois a lake port. His beautiful home which stands back in the park, and is now the Chapter House of the Rev. James Caldwell Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, was built in the late 30's, and is little changed since he lived there. It is one of the very few homes of early governors yet standing in the State. The outside weather-boards are of solid black walnut. In this house Martin VanBuren (President in 1837), Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, Daniel Webster, and many other men of national reputation were entertained with lavish southern hospitality.



DEAF AND DUMB ASYLUM, 1846

Coming out of the park at the corner of Webster Avenue and West State Street, one may look north two blocks to Lafayette Avenue, where in June 1837, Daniel Webster spoke under a magnificent elm which "tho' lost to sight" is still "to memory dear."

At the west side of Webster Avenue stands the fine Illinois School for the Deaf. Provided for by an act of the legislature in 1838-39, with the munificent fund of $1,500.00 appropriated, it was not built until 1843. It is one of the oldest and largest schools for the deaf in the United States and has had, for most of its history, men of fine vision and culture to direct it. There are about five hundred pupils, with a teaching force of fifty instructors.

Turning east now, on West College Avenue, one passes the site of the home of William J. Bryan, who was graduated from Illinois College in 1881, was married and practiced law here, later removing to Lincoln, Nebraska. A large granite boulder marks this site.

In the next block on the south stands the beautiful campus and buildings of Illinois College—the oldest college west of the Alleghanies —chartered in 1829. Beecher Hall, named for the first president, Edward Beecher—a brother of Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe—is still in use. From this college three governors of Illinois, a candidate three times for president, lawyers, judges, presidents of colleges, congressmen, and noted divines have been graduated with honors. William Herndon, Lin-

ILLINOIS COLLEGE IN 1833

coln's law partner, was a student here in 1837. In 1929 the college will celebrate its one hundredth anniversary.

In the block opposite the college, at 1162 West College Avenue, stood the home of Jonathan B. Turner. He was the father of the bill providing for land grant universities, and introduced the Osage orange hedge to the western pioneers who could not afford to build fences.

Several blocks farther east, one passes the beautiful campus of Academy Hall, now the girls' dormitory of Illinois College, but founded in 1830, and then called the Jacksonville Female Academy. Notice the magnificent sweep of the elm trees on this campus. From this school Mrs. W. J. Bryan, then Mary Baird, was graduated in 1881.

In the next block, at 344 stands the former home of Judge William E. Thomas, who taught the first school in the town in 1826, his salary being raised by subscriptions. He paid $1.00 a week for board, washing and fuel—paid in pork, cattle or produce.

At the corner of South Main and West College Avenue stood the house in which Ellen Hardin Walworth was born. She was the daughter of General John J. Hardin, who fell at the battle of Buena Vista, Mexico, in 1847. She was one of the three founders of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and a fine marble tablet on the building which stands here, has been erected to her memory by the local chapter.

JACKSONVILLE FEMALE ACADEMY, 1854

Turning south, at this corner on Main Street, one is following the old road which led in pioneer days to Vandalia, the State capitol, and to St. Louis.

A mile south of the square is located the Jacksonville State Hospital for the Insane. In 1846 Dorothea Dix the noted philanthropist, visited Jacksonville to assist in establishing a hospital for the insane. The result of her earnest and spirited efforts was the creation of the present hospital by the Illinois Legislature of 1847. It lies in a beautiful 160 acre tract of land, and the numerous buildings house patients and attendants to the number of almost 3,500.

Of less historic interest, but of great value as a city's play ground is beautiful Nichols Park which lies about a mile southeast of the State Hospital. This lovely spot, with its lakes, golf links, municipal swimming pool, flower gardens and fine trees, was the gift of Samuel W. Nichols, who is living still to receive the thanks a grateful city renders him.

Returning north, to the corner of College Avenue, and South Main Street, one turns east and at the southeast corner of College Avenue and Mauvaisterre Street stands an old building which is interesting because it was the birthplace of Charles Ray, the movie actor. Next is the site of the first school taught in the city by William E. Thomas.

Turning north at Clay Avenue, the tourist passes along one side of the campus of the Illinois Woman's College, which claims to be the

BEECHER HALL, ILLINOIS COLLEGE

largest college under one roof in the United States. It was chartered in 1847 as the Illinois Conference Female Academy, and in 1852 was re-chartered as a Female College. It is still under the supervision of the Methodist Church and is a fine institution with about five hundred students from all parts of the United States.

Just east of the Woman's College stands Routt College, a Catholic institution, which is co-educational. Across the street stands Our Savior's Hospital, under the control of the Order of the Holy Cross. This site is historically interesting because the east part of the building was the home of the War Governor of Illinois, Richard Yates. Here he lived, and here the younger Yates was born. The elder Yates died in St. Louis, Mo., November 28, 1873, but his widow and family occupied this home for many years after his death.

In the next block east stands Passavant Hospital. On this site stood the home of General John J. Hardin, from whence he went to die on a Mexican battle field. He secured in 1839, the passage of the first local option liquor law in Illinois. This was also the site of the first sermon in Morgan County—preached by Rev. Jos. Basey, a Methodist Episcopal minister.

Next east, after crossing the tracks of the Chicago & Alton and C., B. & Q. railroads, the State School for the Blind appears. In 1847 a blind man, Samuel Bacon, came to Jacksonville to interest citizens in a school for the blind. He was told to get some pupils together and show

ACADEMY HALL, ILLINOIS COLLEGE GIRLS' DORMITORY

what could be done. After an exhibition before the legislature, they passed a bill establishing the "Illinois Institution for the Education of the Blind." This was the fourth school of its kind to be opened in the United States. Since 1849, thousands of pupils have graduated and gone out to live useful lives in their home communities.

Farther east about two blocks, stands the former home of Brigadier General Benjamin Grierson, of the United States Army, who saw valiant service in the Civil War and in the Indian uprisings, and who made the celebrated raid within the enemies' lines in Mississippi during the Civil War.

In Central Park stood the first and second court houses of Morgan County. The latter was a brick building costing $4,000.00 and it stood in the southwest corner of the park. In this building Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, Governor Joseph Duncan, and other intellectual giants practiced law.

Jacksonville was a noted station on the "Underground Railroad." In the early thirties Ebenezer Carter, Jonathan B. Turner, Elihu Wolcott, D. B. Ayers, Samuel Adams, Daniel C. Pierson and Dr. M. M. L. Reed were very active, as were some students at Illinois College. The farm home of Ebenezer Carter, south of town, was an important local station, and many were the slaves who found refuge and succor there.

In June, 1832, William Cullen Bryant visited his brothers who lived in Jacksonville. He re-

JACKSONVILLE STATE HOSPITAL

ported the buildings here were better than those in Springfield.

In 1833 was organized the Ladies' Society for the Promotion of Education of Females. This was the first Woman's Club in the United States and the first club in the world to be officered by women, and is in existence today, now being called "The Ladies' Education Society."

In 1836 Rev. Peter Akers organized the Ebenezer Manual Labor School, near Ebenezer Church. This was the first Methodist Theological school in America and the first manual training school in Illinois. In 1843 the first medical school in Illinois was established as a department of Illinois College.

In 1837, the Illinois Teachers' Association was organized at Illinois College commencement. This was the first organization of teachers in Illinois.

Another unique institution is the Woolen Mills of J. Capps & Sons, founded in 1839. It is said to be the only mill in the United States where they take the raw wool in at one end of the mill and turn it out a finished suit of clothes at the other end. The grandsons of the founder are the managers and owners.

In 1849 Jacksonville became the refuge of 350 Portuguese Colonists who fled from religious persecution in the Island of Madeira. In 1852, 211 more came and in 1855, 274 more. These people have been largely members of the Presbyterian church and the Northminster Presbyterian church is now the lineal descendent of

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE FEMALE COLLEGE, 1851

a Presbyterian church formed in 1845 in Madeira.

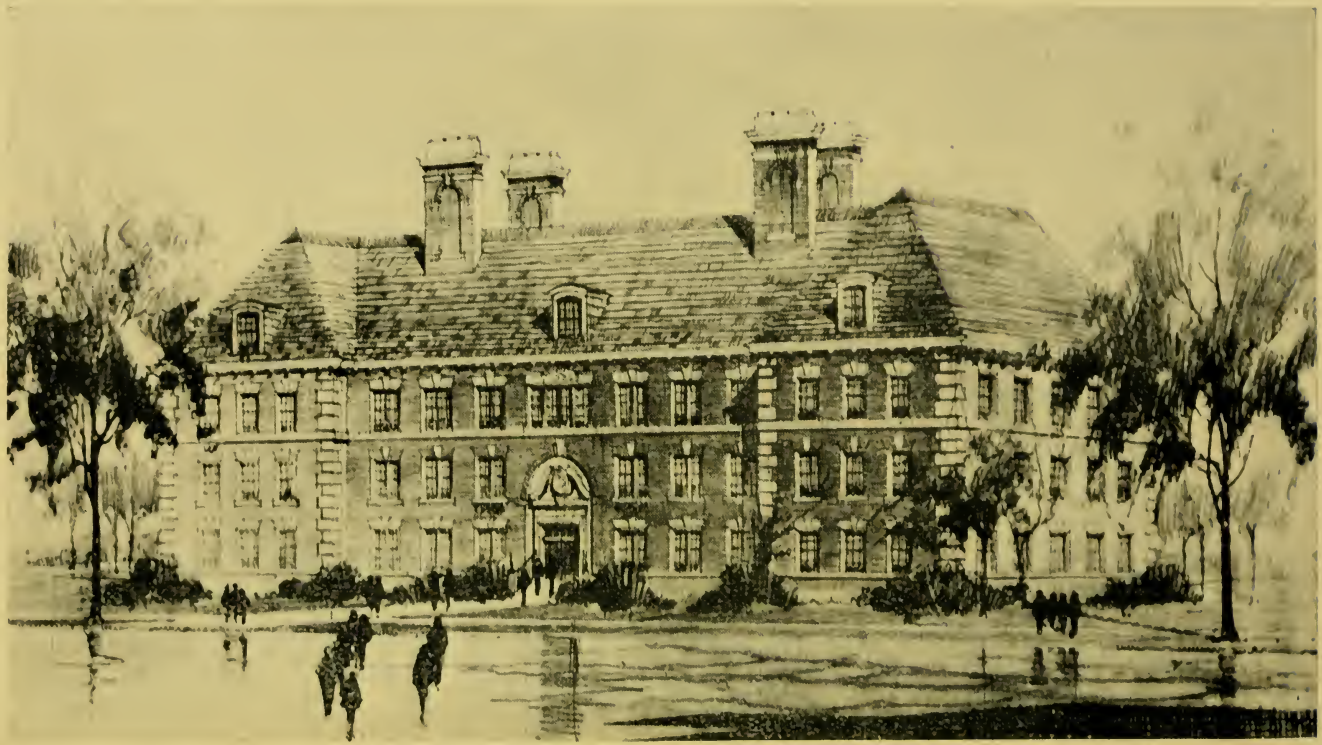
Of later historical interest, following the World War, the first band of Gold Star Mothers was organized in Jacksonville, which now is a National organization.

Jacksonville had the first open air school (outside of Cook County) in Illinois, opened in January, 1915.

It also had the first full-time County health officer—beginning in May, 1922.

Entering Jacksonville from the east on Routes 10 and 3 the tourist passes the Oak Lawn Sanitarium—Morgan County's tuberculosis sanitarium. Leaving Jacksonville, going west on Route 36, one passes the beautiful and commodious Norbury Sanatorium, a private hospital for nervous diseases.

SWIMMING POOL, NICHOLS PARK



NEW SCIENCE HALL, ILLINOIS WOMAN'S COLLEGE.

O, Jacksonville, fair Jacksonville,
Thy history thrills our hearts:
May we, as those of olden time,
Be strong to make thy pages bright,
Till our brief days are done.

ILLINOIS SCHOOL FOR BLIND

HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS

Mayor ..... E. E. Crabtree
Mayor-elect ..... J. J. Reeve
Superintendent of Schools ..... Ben F. Shafer
Illinois State School for Deaf ..... Col. John Reig
Jacksonville State Hospital ..... Dr. E. L. Hill
Illinois School for Blind ..... Robert W. Woolston
Illinois College ..... C. H. Rammelkamp, President
Illinois Woman's College .... C. P. McClelland, President
Routt College ..... Father Costello

SERVICE CLUBS

Business and Professional Women ... Jennie C. Rabjohns
Rotary Club ..... Harry M. Andre
Kiwanis ..... John Larson
Lions ..... H. H. Vasconcellos
Triangle ..... John Murray

SECOND COURT HOUSE, MORGAN COUNTY, WHERE LINCOLN PRACTICED

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